

New parents and others who care for babies and small children need to pay special attention to fire safety. Children under age 5 are twice as likely to die in a fire than the rest of us. In fact, toddlers age 3 to 4 actually cause a large number of home fires by playing with lighters and matches. And when fire breaks out, babies and toddlers can't escape without your help. Help keep children in your care safe.

**PREPARE** — make your home safer by storing matches, lighters, and other fire-starters away from children; maintaining working smoke alarms; and developing a home fire escape plan.

**PRACTICE** fire safety — especially your home fire escape plan!

**PREVENT THE UNTHINKABLE.**

When it comes to your family's smallest members, remember:

Love alone won't save them.  
Practicing fire safety will.



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Prepare. Practice.  
Prevent the  
Unthinkable.

A Parents' Guide to Fire Safety  
for Babies and Toddlers



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My child is curious about fire. Should I be concerned? What can I do?



**A** Yes, you should be concerned—and you can do a lot. Children do not understand the dangers of fire. In fact, children playing with matches and lighters start many of the home fires that kill children.

- ☐ Calmly but firmly explain to your child that matches and lighters are tools for adults to use carefully. Teach young children to tell an adult if they see matches or lighters.
- ☐ Always store matches and lighters out of children's reach and sight, preferably in a locked cabinet.
- ☐ Purchase only child-resistant lighters. Remember: no lighter is child proof!
- ☐ Never use lighters or matches as a source of amusement. Children may imitate what you do.
- ☐ Always supervise young children closely.
- ☐ Prevent fires by practicing and teaching fire safe behaviors in your home. Keep children 3 feet away from the stove when cooking, don't overload outlets, have your heating systems checked annually and use deep ashtrays and soak the ashes in water, if you smoke.

**FACT: Matches, lighters, and other heat sources are the leading causes of fire-related deaths for children under age 5.**

**FACT: Two thirds of home fires that kill children occur in homes without a working smoke alarm.**

How effective are smoke alarms? Should I put one near my baby's room?



**A** When children die in home fires, it is most often in homes where there are no working smoke alarms. When fire breaks out, you have only seconds to escape its heat, black smoke and deadly gases. Working smoke alarms help you get out in time. Smoke alarms save lives.

- ☐ Put working smoke alarms on each floor of your home, outside sleeping areas, and inside bedrooms where the doors are often closed.
- ☐ If you keep the door to your infant's room closed, keep a working smoke alarm inside the room and use a baby monitor so that you can hear the alarm sound.
- ☐ As soon as you know children are ready, familiarize them with the sound of your smoke alarms. Teach them that if one goes off, they must crawl on the floor under the smoke, leave the home, and meet at a designated place outside.
- ☐ Smoke alarms must be maintained. Test the batteries in your smoke alarms monthly. Replace the batteries at least once a year.

What can we do to help make sure that our family, especially the little ones, can escape a fire safely?

**A** A fire can engulf your home in a matter of seconds. You'll need to react quickly. Be prepared with a detailed fire escape plan. Practice it with your children, as often as you can and at least twice a year. Children who have practiced an escape plan are less likely to panic and hide and more likely to get out safely.

- ☐ Your fire escape plan begins with a basic diagram of your home. Mark all windows and doors, and plan two routes out of each room.
- ☐ Consider several fire scenarios, such as a fire starting in the kitchen, basement or bedroom.
- ☐ Figure out the best way for you to help babies and toddlers get out. How will you get to them? Carry them? You may want to keep a baby harness near the crib, to carry the baby and leave your hands free for another child. If you have older children too, have them practice crawling, touching doors, or going to the window, according to your escape plan.
- ☐ Prepare an alternate fire escape plan so that you can escape safely with young children even if one parent or guardian is away when a fire occurs.
- ☐ When practicing the fire escape plan, show children how to cover their nose and mouth to reduce smoke inhalation.
- ☐ Keep home exits clear of toys and debris.
- ☐ Have a safe meeting place outside the home and teach children never to go back inside.

